

## **SIERRA LEONE CUSTOMS**

### **Greetings:**

Greetings vary depending on the ethnic group, but among all groups it is important for a person to greet another before beginning a conversation.

An initial “Hello” (*Kushe* in Krio, *Bua* in Mende, and *Seke* in Temne) is acceptable in most situations. Men and women shake with the right hand.

When meeting a person of high rank, one customarily supports one's right arm with the left arm—implying that the other's hand is of great weight. People may also touch their right hand to their heart after a handshake. When greeting, it is polite to ask “How are you?” (*Ow di bodi?* in Krio). A typical response is the equivalent of “I give thanks to God” (*A tel God tanki* in Krio). Good-bye might be said with the phrases *A de go* (I'm going) or *Nain dat* (That's all).

Sierra Leoneans often address others by the title *Mr.* or *Miss* followed by their first names. Other terms vary according to age relationship. One may use *auntie*, *uncle*, *ma*, or *pa* to address older people. Sierra Leoneans often address strangers as *padi* (friend).

### **Gestures:**

It is improper for a woman to whistle.

Sierra Leoneans frequently hiss to get someone's attention and use the phrase *Ah sey* (I say).

People use only the right hand for passing items. They avoid pointing the soles of their feet at another person.

### **Holidays:**

Sierra Leone's national day is Independence Day (27 Apr.), which is celebrated by eating and drinking during the day and taking part in lantern parades at night.

Western and Christian holidays such as New Year's, Easter, and Christmas are celebrated universally, as is Pray Day, the last day of *Ramadan* (the Muslim holy month when worshipers fast each day from sunrise to sunset).

A common tradition surrounding New Year's and Easter is to have a party, sometimes with a sound system, at a nearby river or beach. In towns with high hills, like Kabala, the New Year's tradition is to climb the mountain, taking along livestock to be slaughtered for a celebratory feast. Masquerades are a popular part of big celebrations: masked “devils,” which often are associated with specific secret societies, entertain the people.